

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ISLAMA 05947 241134Z

53

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 IO-13 ORM-03 SR-02 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03

RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-15 AID-20 EA-11 ACDA-19

OMB-01 RSR-01 /176 W

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R 240920Z JUL 73

FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 189

INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMCONSUL KARACHI

AMCONSUL LAHORE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PK, IN, BG

SUBJ: INDO-PAK MEETING IN RAWALPINDI

SUMMARY: INDIAN DELEGATION ARRIVED RAWALPINDI JULY 23 AND INDO-PAK TALKS TO BEGIN MORNING JULY 24. INDIANS REPORTEDLY WISH CONCLUDE MEETING BY JULY 26. DRAMATIC BREAKTHROUGH IN TALKS UNLIKELY. PAKS WILL CONTINUE TO SEEK RELEASE OF POWS AND DROPPING OF WAR CRIMES TRIALS WHILE EXPRESSING WILLINGNESS ACCEPT LIMITED NUMBER OF BIHARIS AND OFFERING IN RETURN REPATRIATION OF BENGALIS, RECOGNITION OF BANGLADESH AND UN MEMBERSHIP FOR BDG. PAKS SEE WAR CRIMES TRIALS AS KEY ISSUE, WITH BHUTTO FACING STIFFENING DOMESTIC OPPOSITION TO TRIALS AND PROBABLY STILL HOPING HE CAN HEAD THEM OFF. OTHER MAJOR ISSUE, TRANSFER OF BIHARIS, PROBABLY SUSCEPTIBLE TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 ISLAMA 05947 241134Z

NEGOTIATIONS IF WAR CRIMES QUESTION RESOLVED. GOP MAY

PROPOSE RETURNING ALL POWS EXCEPT THOSE WANTED FOR TRIAL, WITH PAKS RETAINING EQUIVALENT NUMBER BENGALLEES AND REPATRIATING REST. END SUMMARY.

1. TWENTY-FOUR MEMBER INDIAN DELEGATION HEADED BY P.N. HAKSAR ARRIVED ISLAMABAD LATE AFTERNOON JULY 23. GROUP WAS MET BY CHIEF PAK NEGOTIATOR, MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENSE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS AZIZ AHMED, OTHER PAK OFFICIALS, AND SWISS AMBASSADOR REPRESENTING INDIA'S INTERESTS IN PAKISTAN. TALKS ARE SCHEDULED TO BEGIN AT PRESIDENCY IN RAWALPINDI MORNING JULY 24.

2. ARRIVE STATEMENTS BY INDIAN DELEGATION WERE CAUTIOUSLY NON-COMMITTAL. HAKSAR EXPRESSED HOPE THAT MEETING WOULD HELP RESOLVE HUMAN PROBLEMS LEFT OVER FROM 1971 WAR AND SAID HE INTENDED PROVIDE GOP WITH "CLARIFICATIONS" OF APRIL 17 INDIA/BANGLADESH DECLARATION. HE DECLINED SPECULATE ON OUTCOME OF TALKS.

3. INDIAN SIDE REPORTEDLY HAS EXPRESSED DESIRE CONCLUDE TALKS BY JULY 26, DAY ON WHICH SHEIKH MUJIB SCHEDULED DEPART DACCA FOR EUROPE. (PRESIDENT BHUTTO, INCIDENTALLY, WILL BE RETURNING ISLAMABAD FROM HIS EUROPEAN TRIP MORNING JULY 27.)

4. COMMENT: RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH PAK OFFICIALS SUGGEST ODDS ARE AGAINST ANY DRAMATIC BREAKTHROUGH RESULTING FROM RAWALPINDI TALKS. PAK NEGOTIATING OBJECTIVES REMAIN UNCHANGED: RETURN OF ALL POWS, ABANDONMENT BY BANGLADESH OF WAR CRIMES TRIALS, AND ACCEPTANCE OF LIMITED NUMBER BIHARIS AS SELECTED BY GOP. IN RETURN, PAKS ARE PREPARED TO REPATRIATE ALL BENGALLEES, TO RECOGNIZE BANGLADESH, AND TO WITHDRAW THEIR CHINA-SUPPORTED OBJECTION TO BANGLADESH MEMBERSHIP IN UN.

5. KEY TO NEGOTIATIONS IN PAK EYES REMAINS ISSUE OF WAR CRIMES TRIALS, WITH ALL OTHER ISSUES PROBABLY SUSCEPTIBLE TO ACCOMMODATION IF THIS ONE COULD BE DISPOSED OF.

6. BHUTTO'S PAST POSITION ON WAR CRIMES TRIALS HAS BEEN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 ISLAMA 05947 241134Z

SOMEWHAT EQUIVOCAL, WITH PUBLIC DENUNCIATIONS OF TRIALS MINGLED WITH PRIVATE HINTS THAT, IF NECESSARY, HE COULD LIVE WITH MODEST NUMBER OF THEM. THIS POSITION HAS HARDENED CONSIDERABLY IN RECENT MONTHS, ALTHOUGH BHUTTO HIMSELF HAS POINTEDLY AVOIDED FLAT DECLARATION THAT TRIALS WOULD DESTROY ALL PROSPECTS OF NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT. THERE SEEM TO BE SEVERAL REASONS FOR THIS HARDENING POSITION: POPULAR OPPOSITION IN PAKISTAN TO TRIALS HAS

INCREASED AS CITIZENRY RECOVERS FROM TRAUMA OF 1971 WAR AND REGAINS CONFIDENCE. ARMED FORCES, IN PARTICULAR, REPORTEDLY ARE ADAMANTLY AGAINST TRIALS BOTH FOR REASONS OF PRESTIGE AND BECAUSE THEY WOULD TEND SULLY IMAGE WHICH NOW IN PROCESS OF RESTORATION. BHUTTO IS THUS AWARE THAT FAILURE TO HEAD OFF WAR CRIMES TRIALS WILL NOT SIT WELL EITHER WITH PUBLIC OR, ESPECIALLY, WITH MILITARY -- ONLY FORCE IN PAKISTAN THAT CONSTITUTES REALISTIC ALTERNATIVE TO HIS OWN RULE. (ADMITTEDLY, THERE IS CERTAIN SELF-FULFILLING ELEMENT AT WORK HERE, IN THAT CONTINUED GOP PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN AGAINST WAR CRIMES TRIALS HAS UNQUESTIONABLY STRENGTHENED DOMESTIC OPPOSITION TO THEM, WHICH IN TURN HAS REQUIRED GOP TO TAKE STILL STRONGER PUBLIC STAND AGAINST THEM.)

7. BEYOND THESE DOMESTIC CONSPUERATIONS, BHUTTO PROBABLY SEES AT LEAST SOME PROSPECT THAT HE CAN ACTUALLY HEAD OFF TRIALS. HAVING BEEN ABLE OVER PAST 18 MONTHS TO MANEUVER INDIA AND BANGLADESH INTO SEVERAL MAJOR CONCESSIONS (E.G., TROOP WITHDRAWALS, DROPPING BANGLADESH RECOGNITION AS PRE-CONDITION TO RETURN OF POWS), WHILE CONCEDING RELATIVELY LITTLE IN RETURN, BHUTTO MAY FEEL THERE IS CHANCE HE CAN PULL THIS ONE OFF TOO IF HE KEEPS PRESSING.

8. OTHER STICKY ISSUE FOR GOP IS BANGLADESH DEMAND THAT PAKS TAKE ROUGHLY QUARTER-MILLION BIHARIS WHO HAVE OPTED FOR PAKISTAN. PAKS HAVE ROUNDLY DENOUNCED BANGLADESH DEMAND, CITING PRECEDENTS AS FAR BACK AS TRIESTE AND POST-WORLD WAR I POLAND. THERE ARE SIGNS, HOWEVER, THAT THIS ISSUE MAY PROVE LESS INTRACTABLE THAN WAR CRIMES TRIALS, WORKING ITSELF OUT INTO QUESTION OF HOW MANY BIHARIS PAKISTANIS CAN BE INDUCED TO TAKE AND HOW FEW BANGLADESH CAN BE PERSUADED TO PRESS ON THEM.

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PAGE 04 ISLAMA 05947 241134Z

9. ONLY NEW ELEMENT THAT PAKS MAY BE PREPARED PUT FORTH AT THIS MEETING IS SUGGESTION, BROACHED INFORMALLY ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS BY PAK OFFICIALS, THAT (A) GOI REPATRIATE ALL POWS EXCEPT THE 195 EARMARKED FOR WAR CRIMES TRIALS, WHOM GOI WOULD RETAIN; (B) GOP IN TURN WOULD REPATRIATE ALL BENGALIS EXCEPT THE 200-ODD FORMER CIVIL SERVANTS UNDER DETENTION; AND (C) RETAINED GROUPS BE SUBJECT FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS PERHAPS INVOLVING TRIALS AND ULTIMATE EXCHANGE. (SEPARATE BUT PARALLEL UNDERSTANDING WOULD HAVE TO BE REACHED WITH BANGLADESH ON TRANSFER OF BIHARIS.) IN WORDS OF ONE PAK OFFICIAL, THIS WOULD HAVE DECIDED ADVANTAGE OF REDUCING NUMBER OF DETAINED AND DISPLACED PERSONS IN SUBCONTINENT FROM PERHAPS 200,000 TO ROUGHLY 400. WE HAVE NO IDEA HOW INDIA AND BANGLADESH WOULD REACT TO PROPOSAL OF THIS NATURE IF PAKS PRESENT IT.

10. IN SUM, PROBLEMS NEGOTIATORS FACE WICH FORMIDABLE
BUT ONE CAN HOPE THAT MEETING WILL AT LEAST MARK
BEGINNING OF RESUMED FACE-TO-FACE NEGOTIATIONS.
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